

# **CERTIFICATION NEWSLETTER RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**SPRING 2004**

The Office of Teacher Preparation, Certification, and Professional Development will be issuing this newsletter periodically to keep you informed on a variety of initiatives under way that may be of interest to you. Should you have any questions, please contact the office at 401-222-4600 exts. 2256, 2257, 2258, and 2260; ITTY 800-745-5555; Voice 800-745-6575. The web site can be accessed through [www.ridoe.net](http://www.ridoe.net).

## **LIFE CERTIFICATION**

All certificates issued initially prior to May 1, 1997 are eligible for life certification provided all academic and experience requirements are met before **JANUARY 1, 2005**. No credits are needed to maintain a life certificate.

## **VALIDATION STUDY OF CONTENT TEST FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATORS**

On March 30-31, 2004 four (4) panels of middle school educators were convened in Providence to validate the use of content tests in the areas of math, science, English/language arts, and social studies. This activity was conducted in response to the "No Child Left Behind Act" that requires teachers to demonstrate subject area expertise for their teaching assignment. Educational Testing Service will inform the Department of the results of the validation study by June 2004. If validated by the panels of teachers, the Board of Regents will consider the adoption of these tests for the certification of middle level educators in the fall of 2004.

## **NON-TRADITIONAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES/PROGRAM APPROVAL STANDARDS**

On February 12, 2004 the Board of Regents adopted program guidelines for non-traditional certification programs. The purpose of these programs is to meet the demand for qualified teachers in documented high need areas; to provide training and support that prepares candidates without previous teaching experience to become effective classroom teachers in concert with the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards; to attract candidates for teaching from business, industry, military or other career environments; to attract a greater number of candidates for teaching from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. Institutions that wish to offer a non-traditional program must submit their proposal to the Department for review and approval. At the same meeting the Board also approved new performance-based Program Approval Standards for all college teacher preparation programs. These new standards encompass four broad areas of proficiency in the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards, Professional and Pedagogical Studies, Diversity and Resource. These new standards reflect current research and insure that beginning educators graduate with the knowledge and skills to be effective and proficient in the teaching profession.

## **NEW FEDERAL FLEXIBILITY FOR HIGHLY "QUALIFIED TEACHERS" UNDER NCLB**

The Department of Education has modified our HOUSSE plan to incorporate the most recent guidance from Secretary Paige in meeting the federal definition of a "highly qualified" teacher. This includes more flexibility with the assignment of middle school teachers than previously allowed.

## **RHODE ISLAND CERTIFICATION POLICY ADVISORY BOARD**

The Rhode Island Certification Policy Advisory Board endorsed the Non-Traditional Certification Program Guidelines and Program Approval Standards. The Board is now considering a proposal to establish a PreK-12 principal certificate.

## **TEACHER QUALITY**

Over the past year, the Department has been working to unite mentoring and I-Plan to create a comprehensive teacher quality system. The principles that guide the mentoring program and the structure of

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the I-Plan are mutually supportive. The focus on collegial professional relationships, on-going high quality professional development, and professional self-determination are foundational pieces of teacher quality.

The Department's Fellows: Hilda Potrzeba, a first grade teacher from Lincoln, Lisa Foehr, a French teacher from Exeter-West Greenwich and Marjorie Kazin-Boyce, a school counselor from Foster-Glocester are working to strengthen the natural linkages between I-Plan and Mentoring through professional development and technical assistance.

### COVENTRY 'HIGHLY QUALIFIED' MODEL PROJECT

The Coventry School Department has initiated a project to design and implement a district process for ensuring "highly qualified" teachers in support of No Child Left Behind legislation and Department regulations. A workshop was held to train a cadre of one hundred educators consisting of administrators, department chairs, teachers and union leaders with an understanding of the "highly qualified" requirements and regulations. This group formed into school-based teams to support all teachers in their buildings as they determine their status with respect to being "highly qualified." Flow charts were developed along with verification and assurance forms and a time line was established for data collection. The final step in the process will be a comprehensive district response to meet regulations for all teachers in core areas to be "highly qualified" by 2006. This systemic response will address professional development programs designed to assist those teachers needing a **Plan to Become Highly Qualified** by 2006.

### MENTORING

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." *Andrew Carnegie*

The mentor network continues to meet on a monthly basis. The sessions this year were hosted by a variety of districts. A number of guest speakers presented on topics based on the needs identified by districts.

MENTOCONX, the Mentor Network Listserv, has been in operation now for over a year. This listserv is the means for providing Mentor Network Session minutes and important information to all coordinators. Coordinators also have used the list to pose questions and share resources. Much sharing and learning have taken place in the area of mentoring.

The Teacher Quality Fellows spent much of fall conducting annual visits to districts to review their mentor programs. Meeting with District Mentor Coordinators across the state enables the Department to determine where the mentor programs are and how assistance can be provided in moving them forward.

This spring the Department held trainings for new Mentor Coordinators across the state.

On February 24 and March 2, 2004, a Level 1 Mentor Coordinator Training was held. It consisted of a two-day training that covered the following:

- Exploration of mentoring beliefs
- Qualities of good mentors
- Adult development
- Communication strategies
- Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards
- Administrative roles

On March 9, 2004, a Level 2 Mentor Coordinator Training was held. It consisted of a two-day training that covered the following:

- Peer Coaching

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- Individual Professional Development Plans
- Parent Communication/Family Friendly Schools

### Mentoring News from the Local School Districts

Cranston: “We had a variety of meetings and workshops that have focused on the following:

- I-Plan
- Beginning Teacher Standards
- Meeting with Special Education Coordinators
- Keeping a Journal
- ER&D Workshops: Thinking Math, Beginning Reading and Foundations of Education

The ER&D (Educational Research and Dissemination) workshops have been the most popular and well-attended.” Submitted by Dennis Morrell

East Greenwich: “The highlight of the 03-04 program will take place at our April workshop on “Children and Depression.” Two social workers from St. Mary’s Home have agreed to present to our teachers. This session has been opened up to all East Greenwich educators with the goal being that everyone realizes that “mentoring” is part of the professional development program. Other sessions so far have included small group discussions on parent conferences and NCLB required testing and PLPs.”

Submitted by Christine D’Acchioli

Lincoln: “This year we have added two different strategies for promoting teacher growth and reflection. We distributed articles on best practices with thought-provoking questions and asked that teachers read and reflect on their readings. They then shared their findings with their colleagues in a mentoring session and discussed what they would bring back to the classroom. The second major change was made to the delivery of I-Plan training. This year the trainings took place in the computer labs and the educators developed and completed their plans electronically. This allowed for a pre-review of their plans and changes to be made right away. Each educator left with a disc that contained his/her plan, as well as all necessary forms for submission and the verification of the professional development activities. We feel these changes met with positive results.”

Submitted by Fred Hoppe, Hilda Potrzeba, and Eileen Rapose

North Kingstown: “This year our district is offering Level IV training for mentors. It will focus on peer coaching. We are using Pam Robbins’ work as our model. Peer coaching seems to be the one area our mentors have been reluctant to engage in. Hopefully, this training will change that.”

Submitted by Linda Martin

### **IPLAN**

This has been a transition year for I-Plan. In anticipation of a positive action by the Board of Regents which would move I-Plan from a pilot with 650 I-Planners to a full statewide implementation, the Department has worked to streamline the process, to create materials that are computer ready and to re-train the I-Plan Review Panel. It has been our goal to maintain the integrity of the I-Plan while creating a system that will serve a large number of I-Planners effectively and efficiently. The response to the streamlined I-Plan from I-Planners and the Review Panel has been positive.

Moving I-Plan from a pilot to a statewide re-certification program requires approval by the Board of Regents to hold statewide public hearings that solicit feedback and comment on the initiative. The public comment not only becomes part of the public record, but also provides insight into the needs of educators that will help tailor the process for those who will use the I-Plan for re-certification. After public hearings the Board of Regents will make its decision about the future of I-Plan.

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### TEACHER ASSISTANTS

Rhode Island has provided national leadership in the area of teacher assistant training and retention. During the past year we have focused on building capacity to ensure that instructional teacher assistants in Rhode Island meet the federal requirement under NCLB by demonstrating competence with English/language arts and mathematics as a requisite for their positions. We are pleased to report that school districts are providing preparation classes, support and testing sites for their teacher assistants. Some districts are also allowing TAs from outside their districts or aspiring teacher assistants to take the test on site. Preliminary evidence indicates that teacher assistants are successful in passing the ParaPro test.

In recognition of Rhode Island's leadership in preparing and supporting teacher assistants on-going professional development, the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals is holding its annual conference, "Catching Wave of Excellence", at the Biltmore Hotel in Providence on May 20-22, 2004. We encourage our teacher assistants and school district administrators to attend. Information is available on the Center's website: [www.nrcpara.org](http://www.nrcpara.org).

### NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION (NBPTS)

During August of 2003, the School of Education at the University of Rhode Island became the new facilitator of the National Board Certification process. In collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Education, the University is primarily responsible for assisting teachers to obtain state and federal subsidies to help defray some of the initial application costs for the NBPTS process. In addition URI will provide support services (i.e. coursework or mentoring) through the NBPTS process.

All interested candidates should first visit the NBPTS website at [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org) to gain a full understanding of the process, requirements, responsibilities and tasks involved in achieving National Board certification. Teachers may then contact URI to inquire about available subsidy money and technical assistance. It is important to note that state and federal budgeting for subsidies are set yearly and award of these funds is based on a first come, first served basis. Should funds be available, applications must be filled out within the time deadlines specified by NBPTS, and URI, in order to insure the timely payment of subsidies. If there are no subsidy funds available, then all interested candidates can be placed on a waiting list to be considered for future consideration. Please note, should one apply directly on-line to NBPTS, he/she then assumes responsibility for **all costs** and cannot be considered retroactively for state subsidy.

For more information, contact Christine P. Dolan, URI/ School of Education, at (401) 874-4108 or email at [Christine@uri.edu](mailto:Christine@uri.edu).

### RHODE ISLAND GENERAL LAWS UPDATES

Certification of Athletic Coaches: Two important changes were made in the 2003 session. First, applicants for coaching certificates must demonstrate that they have completed an approved first aid course within 3 years of the date of application. Second, public schools must annually require "proof of current and valid first aid training from all coaches in their athletic programs." Consequently, active coaches must have current Department-approved first aid training. Individuals with expired first aid cards are prohibited from coaching in a public school athletic program. (RIGL 16-11.1-1)

Teachers' Post-Retirement Employment: In addition to serving as a substitute teacher in the public schools for up to 90 days, a retired teacher or athletic coach may be employed to fill a vacant position (including, but not limited to, a tutor, mentor principal or mentor-assistant principal) in a public school for up to 90 days without any forfeiture or reduction in retirement benefits provided that the employer has made a good faith effort each school year to fill the position with a non-retiree without success. (RIGL 16-16-24)

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Teacher Assistants: Several changes regarding the qualification of teacher assistants were made in the 2003 session. The changes implement provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. First, effective immediately, all teacher assistants must hold a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma. Second, teacher assistants hired after January 8, 2002 who provide instructional services must have completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education, obtained an associate (or higher) degree, or otherwise can demonstrate through a formal state or local academic assessment an appropriate level of knowledge and ability to assist instructing reading, writing and mathematics or reading readiness, writing readiness and mathematics readiness, as appropriate. Assessments developed at the local level may consist of performance assessments documenting teacher assistant skills. Third, teacher assistants hired on or before January 8, 2002 who provide instructional services must meet the requirements for newly employed teacher assistants no later than January 8, 2006. Fourth, effective July 11, 2003, employers shall pay for up to two test administration fees for all teacher assistants hired prior to July 1, 2003. (RIGL 16-11.2-2)

### REQUIREMENTS FOR RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATES

Our office frequently receives inquiries regarding the need to obtain a master degree. The most common misunderstanding is that a master degree must be completed within five years of obtaining provisional certification. Under regulations in effect since the mid 1980s, a master degree is **not** required to maintain a teaching certificate. Renewal of certificates requires completing a specified number of credits within a defined time frame. Individuals **may** engage in the pursuit of an advanced degree to fulfill this requirement but are not required to do so.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Q: My provisional certificate will be expiring soon. I have not used it in Rhode Island public schools. Do I still need to complete six (6) credits?

A: Yes! Regulations mandate completion of six credits within the three years of provisional certification whether or not you use your certificate in Rhode Island public schools.

2. Q: My five-year professional certificate will be expiring soon. I have not used (or used for only a few years) this certificate in Rhode Island public schools. Do I need to fulfill the nine (9)-credit requirement for renewal?

A: No! If you have not used your five-year professional certificate at all in Rhode Island public schools, you do not need to complete the nine (9)-credit requirement. If you have used the certificate for a portion of the allotted time and have not completed the nine (9) credits, the certificate will be renewed for the balance of the unused time. When the remaining time is used you will need to submit the nine (9) credits for renewal. **HOWEVER IF YOU HAVE USED YOUR FIVE-YEAR PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE IN RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR THE FULL FIVE YEARS YOU MUST SUBMIT THE NINE (9) CREDITS FOR RENEWAL.**

3. Q: I am interested in completing in-service credits. How are they calculated?

A: In-service credits are calculated on the basis of contact hours. Fifteen (15) contact hours equals one (1) in-service credit. Frequently there is some confusion in the manner in which in-service professional development activities are reported. Some agencies use "CEUs" and others use professional development points (PDPs). These are not acceptable forms of documentation for certification purposes. All professional development activities must provide verification of contact hours. Should you have any questions about acceptable in-service activities and credit(s) please contact the Office of Teacher Certification **before** you engage in any program.

4. Q: To whom do I make out the check?

A: General Treasurer, State of Rhode Island.

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5. Q: What is the cost for life certification?

A: \$25.00

6. Q: How can I teach with just a bachelor degree?

A: You are eligible for a substitute certificate with just a bachelor degree.

7. Q: Do my transcripts have to be originals in a sealed envelope?

A: We accept official or student-issued transcripts, or original grade reports. They do not need to be in a sealed envelope. Transcripts should be submitted as part of your complete application package and not sent to us separately.

8. Q: Do all states have reciprocity

A: No. You can download the list of states from our website ([www.ridoe.net](http://www.ridoe.net))

9. Q: What am I allowed to teach with an emergency substitute certificate?

A: The certificate is valid for general subject matter in grades PK-12.

10. Q: What do I need for a coaching certificate?

A: A copy of a valid First Aid Card completed within 3 years. Requirement list is also available from our website.

11. Q: How long does my application stay on file?

A: Two (2) years

12. Q: What is the fee to get an evaluation of my credentials?

A: \$25.00.

13. Q: To whom do I speak about I-Plans?

A: Cheryl Kachdourian at extension 2215.

14. Q: How do I get my test scores and what is the passing score?

A: ETS in New Jersey will send you a copy of your test scores.

Principles of Learning and Teaching Test (PLT)-Passing Score: 167.

Elementary Content Knowledge Test (0014)-Passing Score: 145

Elementary Content Area Exercises Test (0012)-Passing Score: 148

15. Q: What is the fee to renew a 5-year professional certificate?

A: \$100.

16. Q: What is the fee to renew a 3-year provisional certificate?

A: \$25.

17. Q: I want to add a new area of certification. Which form do I use?

A: The Renewal/Request form can be downloaded from our website.

Request the new area in Section C. The fee is \$25.

18. Q: I am renewing more than one 5-year professional certificate. Is the fee \$100 for each certificate?

A: No. All professional certificates renewed at the same time, the fee is \$100 for all.

All extended certificates renewed at the same time, the fee is \$25 for all.

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19. Q: May I make an appointment with a consultant to discuss my certification?

A: No. All evaluations are done via request by mail.

20. Q: Where do I apply for positions, either full-time or part-time?

A: At the individual school districts, office of the superintendent.

21. Q: To whom do I speak regarding National Board Certification?

A: Christine Dolan at URI, 874-4108 or fax at 874-5471.

22. Q: Do I need to send a statement of service if only substituted?

A: If your substitute teaching experience totals the full term of the certificate, either separately or in combination with full-time employment, you should obtain a statement of service from the superintendent(s) verifying the total number of days worked in all school districts.

23. Q: Are CEUs the same as in-service credits?

A: No. Fifteen (15) contact hours of professional development equals one (1) in-service credit. Professional development credit is awarded after pre-approval by the Department contact person, Becky Wright.

24. Q: What are the requirements for.....??

A: You can download the requirements and applications for all areas of certification from our website at [www.ridoe.net](http://www.ridoe.net).

25. Q: How do I get a copy of my test scores (NTE, PLT etc.)?

A: You should first call this office to determine if your file is in the office. If you have life certification in all areas, your file could be in the Record Center Archives. In such a case, staff must request your file. You may come into the office, show proper ID (driver's license), take the scores from your file, make a copy in the URI library on the first floor. Upon return of your scores to the Office of Teacher Certification, your ID will be returned to you.

26. Q: May my principal send the statement of service verifying my teaching experience?

A: No. The statement of service must come from the superintendent of schools, or designee, on original school department letterhead. If you are employed in the Catholic schools, the statement of service must come from the superintendent of the diocese. If you are employed in private, independent schools, the statement must come from the school director or principal.

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